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First Selectman

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

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DIANE H. MCKEEGAN
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SARAH D. COOK
DAVID E. STAVENS
RONALD F. STOMBERG
JOHN W. TURNER

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN POLICIES COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
Commission Room A
February 19, 2019

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah D. Cook, Ronald F. Stomberg, John W. Turner

OTHERS PRESENT: Lori Spielman, First Selectman; Felicia LaPlante, Acting Finance Officer; Joy Hollister, Human Services Director; Erin Graziani, Senior Center Director; Susan Phillips, Hall Memorial Library Director; Sgt. Brian Santa, Resident State Troopers' Supervisor; Barbara Murdach, Animal Control Officer; Kathy Kane-DiBacco, Assistant Animal Control Officer; Gary Wilson, Assistant Animal Control Officer; Joe Palombizio, Emergency Management Director

I. Call to Order: Mr. Turner, Chairman, called the Town Policies Committee (TPC) meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

II. Citizens' Forum: No one came forward.

III. Approval of Minutes: December 10, 2018

MOVED (COOK), SECONDED (TURNER) AND PASSED [AYE: TURNER/COOK; ABSTAIN: STOMBERG] TO APPROVE THE TOWN POLICIES COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 10, 2018.

IV. Regulations for Use of Town Meeting Facilities Policy

Mr. Turner opened discussion regarding this policy. He noted that Lisa Houlihan, Town Planner and Dustin Huguenin, Recreation Director were not in attendance, but had provided input through email which was distributed to the TPC members.

Mr. Turner stated that Ms. Houlihan has requested that the policy include a statement that the Land Use Boards have priority use of the Town Hall Annex meeting room, similar to the statement (#4) referring to the Board of Selectman (BOS) and the Board of Finance (BOF) having priority use of the Town Hall Meeting Hall. Mr. Turner asked if anyone present had concerns with this request, and there were none. Ms. Spielman said that the only conflict that could come up is if the BOS and the BOF need to meet on the same night, then they would

take priority, but that would be a very rare occurrence. She said that should this come up, the staff would work it out for all concerned.

Mr. Turner said that Mr. Huguenin suggested that there be verbiage limiting private use of Town buildings by groups that do not primarily reside in Ellington. Mr. Turner said that it is his understanding that Mr. Webb has mentioned this in the past and he thinks it's a good point, as well. He said if meeting space is going to be provided at taxpayer support, then it makes sense that the group, or at least a majority, is from Ellington.

Ms. Graziani said that this does occur at the Senior Center with at least one of the programs that is offered. Ms. Hollister said that she and Ms. Graziani are working on developing a Senior Center policy that would address this issue. Ms. Phillips said that Hall Memorial Library (HML) does have a policy and it is required that groups be from Ellington.

Mr. Turner pointed out that the Town has a Senior Center policy and a Hall Memorial Library policy and now we are looking at recreating the Town-wide building use policy and these all have to line up together. Ms. Hollister agreed that the policies need to be consistent.

Mr. Turner asked if there is consensus that there needs to be an established percentage of people in a group that must be Ellington residents. There were no objections.

Mr. Stomberg noted that when the Senior Center first opened, outside groups were welcome and encouraged and now they won't be with this policy. Ms. Hollister said that it difficult to justify paying staff to oversee the building during a program when a majority of the participants in a group are not Ellington residents.

Ms. Cook pointed out that in the draft of the policy, it would be required that a Town employee be present throughout the use of a facility, which she has concerns about.

Mr. Turner said that Mr. Huguenin's first recommendation regarding residency has support and requires further discussion to fine tune. He said that Mr. Huguenin's second recommendation suggests limiting the number of reservations that an outside group can make at one time, considering that many groups will want to schedule rooms for a year or more. This topic was discussed in detail and it was determined that currently groups are allowed to schedule a year out, including the Democratic and the Republican Town Committees. Ms. Phillips said that the HML policy allows room reservations up to 12 months in advance. She added that there were 1,100 meetings at HML last year.

Ms. Cook said that Mr. Huguenin is referring to outside groups, not Town Committees, and this would include the Democratic and Republican Town Committees. Ms. Hollister added that the Senior Center allows the Ellington Women's Club, the American Legion and the Ellington Lions Club to hold their meetings at the Senior Center as well as several others, including the Ellington Cemetery Association. These groups book the rooms 12 months in advance. Mr. Turner said that we don't want to fix this if it's not broken, but we do need to be consistent with the decision on this issue.

Mr. Turner said that the policy needs to include a list of the buildings affected by the policy. It was determined that this would include Town Hall, Town Hall Annex, Senior Center, Hall Memorial Library, Arbor Commons (Recreation/Human Services) and the Old Crystal Lake Schoolhouse. Mr. Turner said that this is important to define because the Town also owns the EVFD Firehouse at 6 Nutmeg Drive and the EVAC building on Maple Street.

Mr. Stomberg said that all of these issues are different for each facility and he hasn't seen that there has been much of a challenge with the room reservations that require a detailed policy.

Ms. Spielman said that there needs to be clarification as she has seen Town buildings used for baby showers and other inappropriate uses and this practice had to be discontinued.

Mr. Turner asked if those using the buildings are required to produce a certificate of insurance. There was mixed response on this requirement. Mr. Turner noted that it is in the current policy. Discussion was held regarding certain groups and their ability to afford this insurance; Ms. Cannella said that the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts provide the Town with a certificate of insurance each year to cover all of their Town Property Use events. Mr. Turner said that the policy should detail the terms and should include Workers' Comp coverage. Ms. Cook asked if this includes all of the political groups that use Town buildings. Mr. Turner said that the political groups would routinely have a member of one of the boards with them during their meetings. Ms. Cook said that it could happen that there may not be a Town employee present during a meeting.

Ms. Hollister said that it is important to determine what defines a Town employee and Mr. Turner agreed.

Ms. Hollister said that there are individuals (coaches/umpires/referees) who have access to the Human Services/Recreation building when there is no Town employee present. Mr. Stomberg said that if there are individuals accessing the building who shouldn't be, then the department heads should make sure it doesn't continue to happen. Ms. Hollister said she didn't want to speak for Recreation, as Mr. Huguenin may have a different opinion on the building access.

Ms. Hollister said that there should be structure in determining the succession of which groups are entitled to a reservation in what order. For instance, BOS then BOF then Committees, Boards and Town departments.

Ms. Hollister referred to the draft policy and said that in #3, the Human Services Director and Youth Services Director added to this item. In #4, Town departments needs to be referenced so that there is a succession. In #7, it doesn't reference a private party; she referenced Brookside Park, and Ms. Cannella reminded that this policy is regarding Town buildings and not Town property, which is addressed through the Town Property Use policy.

Ms. Hollister suggested that if custodial time is going to be charged to a group, the policy needs to include a rate that the group will be charged. Ms. LaPlante said that the rate should not be in the policy. Ms. Cannella said that this would be addressed in the application and not specifically in the policy to avoid having to rewrite the policy each time the rate changes.

Ms. Cook said that she is trying to understand what problem the TPC is trying to fix. She said it appears that they are taking a policy that was much shorter and really regulating every situation. She asked what the problem was that sparked this.

Ms. Hollister explained that it came from people using their buildings, people having keys to buildings that are not Town employees, people using their desks, their computers and other inappropriate use. Mr. Turner said that a policy is not going to address these management problems. Ms. Hollister said that there are open spaces where computers are accessible and people have been sitting at these work stations who don't belong there and things have gone missing. Mr. Turner stated that this is shocking and Mr. Stomberg added that the office needs management. Ms. Spielman said she will be checking into this problem.

Ms. LaPlante said that as a resident of Coventry, she would be upset as a taxpayer who pays taxes to have access to Town buildings if it was taken away. She said that residents will be upset if they are not allowed to use Town Buildings.

Mr. Stomberg said it makes more sense for the manager to address problems in their buildings directly because a policy is not going to help. If people have keys who should not, get the keys back or change the locks.

Ms. Cook said that the policy already exists that states that only employees and elected officials are entitled to receive keys. So if that is true, and keys that have been distributed that should not have been, they need to be retrieved and that is not a problem that is going to be resolved by the proposed changes to this policy. That just should not happen.

Mr. Turner told Ms. Hollister that it appears she has a problem; she didn't create it, but she needs to fix it. Ms. Hollister said that she needs to reference a policy.

Mr. Turner said that additional time is needed for this discussion. He said that he doesn't think this policy is going to regulate each building and their methods of booking rooms, etc., but there should be a policy that provides overall guidance that all buildings need to go by.

Ms. Cook said that meetings will go late and that this will generate charges to groups; if this is the goal, then perhaps outside groups should pay a fee to use the Town buildings instead of charging by the half hour for custodial coverage.

Ms. Cannella said that it is her understanding that Mr. Webb's original point was that it is a concern to have individuals in Town buildings after hours where there is no Town employee or custodian present. She added that Mr. Webb will explain his concerns more directly.

Ms. Hollister said that the policy needs to include a statement noting that there are cameras on the premises. Ms. Cook said that her understanding is that signage on and in the building is necessary, but not that it needs to part of the policy.

Ms. Phillips added that HML has a policy that has been working for 27 years. Mr. Turner asked her if she has problems with people inappropriately accessing offices and computers who should not be and Ms. Phillips said that she does not have that problem.

After much discussion, Mr. Turner stated that this policy needs further discussion and will be addressed further at the next meeting.

V. Finance Office Policy:

This agenda item was tabled due to time constraints.

VI. Policy Regarding Barking Dogs:

Mr. Turner opened discussion in reference to the policy. Ms. Murdach introduced Gary Wilson and Kathy Kane-DiBacco, Assistant Animal Control Officers. Ms. Murdach said she has concerns regarding this proposed policy.

She said that the State statute omits discussing vicious dogs which are the bigger problem. Since the Town does not have a noise ordinance and since the present situation has been working fine for her for a long, long time, night-time barking has been addressed with great success. The issue that has come up on Glenwood Road has revolved around day-time barking; she has visited during the day many times and heard no barking. Ms. Murdach said she has not found daytime barking during the hours that the residents have been complaining about. Ms. Murdach said her concern is with nighttime barking, because a certain amount of noise is considered normal during the daytime hours.

Mr. Turner asked if the State statute differentiates between daytime and nighttime barking. Ms. Murdach said that it does not. Mr. Turner clarified that this is a judgement on Ms. Murdach's

part and he asked how this reflects on the quality of life for the people in the neighborhood. Mr. Wilson said that the State takes nighttime barking more seriously than daytime barking. Ms. Murdach said that she has concerns about the progression of the warnings. She said she called Vernon's Animal Control Officer who stated that they have not gotten past the second written warning.

Ms. Spielman said that this problem on Glenwood Road and up by Crystal Lake has been going on for a couple of years. She said that we have to start somewhere and that is why the steps are important.

Sgt. Santa said that the ACO cannot worry about whether or not the warnings are going to advance to the next step; they still have to go through the process. He added that personally, working all different shifts, consideration has to be given to the fact that people need to sleep during all different hours, so daytime barking can be as much of a nuisance as nighttime barking if you have to sleep during the day.

Sgt. Santa added that the people of Glenwood Road have come in in such great force that there is no denying that there is barking going on. He said we are long past claiming that these dogs are not barking just because they don't happen to be barking when the ACO is there. Mr. Turner added that there is definitely a quality of life issue going on there. Sgt. Santa added that the State ACO, Kelly Baker, suggested that the progression be broken down to 3 steps and that it references State statute. He reiterated that the ACO cannot worry about going through the steps; they just have to do it. The email ACO Baker sent was provided to the TPC members.

Ms. Cook also suggested a change to the name of the proposed policy so that it includes vicious dogs.

Ms. Murdach suggested additional edits to the policy regarding adding that a statement, a bark log and the willingness to testify in court must be included.

Mr. Turner asked for a definition of a kennel license and how many kennels there are in Ellington. Ms. Cannella will gather this information from the Town Clerk. Mr. Wilson said that there should be an Ordinance that requires people to keep their dogs inside rather than outside at a certain time of night.

VII. Naming Town Buildings/Facilities – Application Review:

This agenda item was tabled due to time constraints.

Mr. Turner said that there is a very important Board of Finance meeting beginning at 8:00 p.m. tonight, therefore, this discussion needs to continue at a future meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

MOVED (COOK), SECONDED (STOMBERG) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE TOWN POLICIES COMMITTEE AT 7:57 P.M.

Submitted by _____


John W. Turner, Chairman